



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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# PRESS RELEASE

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Project Exile celebrated its Sixth Anniversary in Rochester, NY today at a Report to the Community Luncheon. The program, which is known as Project Exile in Rochester has the name Project Safe Neighborhoods in Buffalo.

U.S. Attorney Battle stated that “gun crime reduction is the top domestic criminal justice initiative of President Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft. Because of our partnerships with state, local and federal law enforcement agencies and community leaders, along the resources and support provided by the President and the Attorney General, we have been able to implement a strong locally-targeted gun violence initiative.”

Project Exile and Project Safe Neighborhoods are comprehensive approaches and multifaceted strategies to deter and punish gun violence from all sides. Both programs are achieving unprecedented coordination among law enforcement officials, with an emphasis on prevention, tactical intelligence gathering, more aggressive prosecutions and enhanced

accountability through performance measures. All levels of law enforcement work together to determine which venue – State or Federal Court – will result in the toughest sentence for a particular gun related crime. A critical element of the local gun violence reduction initiative is an aggressive community outreach campaign that couples a strong enforcement message with prevention and education messages. Criminals are warned that they will do “hard time for gun crime.” Our key community partner in Rochester, Parents Against Violence Everywhere (PAVE), has worked tirelessly to convey the Project Exile message to the community.

Our community has made a collective decision that we can work together regarding gun violence and avoidable tragedies. Avoidable in the sense that so many criminals convicted of gun crimes are back on the streets before they should be and committing additional violent crimes. In cities around the Country where aggressive prosecution of gun crimes has been coupled with tough prison sentences, violent crime has decreased.

From the inception of the Project Exile program in 1998, the United States Attorney’s office has prosecuted 765 defendants for federal firearms violations, of which over 600 cases have been through the Project Exile partnership with local prosecutors and law enforcement. In the last year (September 2003 to September 2004), there have been 182 Project Exile prosecutions with 118 cases being filed in Rochester and 64 cases in Buffalo.

The Monroe County District Attorney has also tracked its firearms prosecutions since

the inception of the program and has prosecuted 564 felony cases. The average sentence has increased from 3.2 years to 4.3 years.

Coordinated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, between January 1, 2003 and December 31, 2003, there were 864 guns traced in Buffalo and 681 guns traced in Rochester. In the first eight months of 2004, the Buffalo Police Department has recovered 464 firearms.

The hard work and dedication of a full complement of partners in Project Exile and Project Safe Neighborhoods is reducing gun violence and making our neighborhoods safer places to live.

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